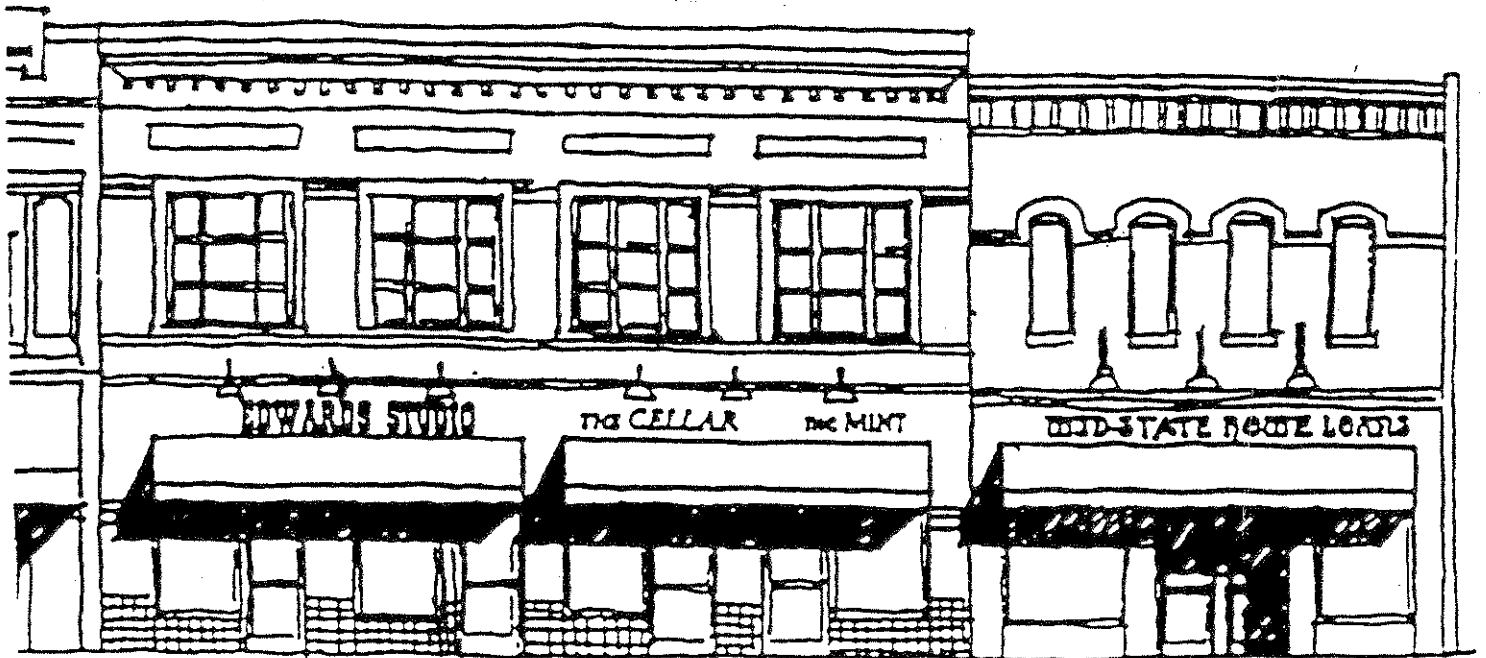


City of Blythe  
Redevelopment Agency

Storefront Improvement Rebate Program

Guidelines



Blythe City Hall  
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235 North Broadway  
Blythe, California  
Phone (760)922-6161 Fax (760)922-4938

**BLYTHE REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY**  
**STOREFRONT IMPROVEMENT REBATE PROGRAM**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

The Storefront Improvement Rebate Program is a financial assistance grant program designed to stimulate economic development activities by enhancing commercial buildings through architectural and aesthetic improvements within the Blythe Redevelopment Agency Project Area. The program works on a reimbursement basis where RDA assistance is provided in recognition of the extremely valuable impact private investment has on the City's effort to maintain the vitality of our commercial areas. The objective of this program is to promote joint public/private investment in identified areas which will compliment and enhance the revitalization efforts for these areas. Eligibility for financial assistance requires that all building improvements (new or renovations) must be approved by the City's Development Services Department. In the downtown area, project eligibility also includes compliance with City of Blythe Downtown Design Guidelines, available through the City's Planning Department. The administration of the Storefront Improvement Rebate Program will be the responsibility of the City of Blythe Redevelopment Agency. No cost of work incurred before the Storefront Improvement Rebate grant has been approved by the Blythe Redevelopment Agency is eligible for reimbursement under this grant program.

The following guidelines have been developed to present the basic elements of the Storefront Improvement Rebate Program with specific emphasis on the eligibility criteria for selection of applicant/area, types of improvements and reimbursable expenditures. Details of the necessary documentation for processing grant applications under this program are outlined in the Procedural Steps.

Nothing in this program obligates the City of Blythe Redevelopment Agency to provide assistance to any applicant. Evaluation of projects is done on a case by case basis. Consideration will be given to timeliness of application, priority of project in regards to the overall Redevelopment Plan, availability of funds, job creation, sales tax generation, quality of development, potential to relieve blight and consistency with the City's Downtown Design Guidelines

The Storefront Improvement Rebate Program has been structured to accommodate upgrades to both active businesses and vacant structures, and on a limited basis, to also provide financial assistance for construction-related improvements associated with new business start-ups. No rebate will be considered on a "partial" basis if the rest of the building/structure cannot become code compliant.

Rebate grants for construction-related improvements are based on the following formulas: new business start-up, a 50% match of eligible expenses up to a maximum of \$20,000; for an Active Business, a 50% match of eligible expenses up to a maximum of \$20,000. For a Vacant Structure, a 25% match of eligible expenses up to a maximum of \$10,000. All applications for assistance must include a business plan to be considered, a sample outline of which is included in the application form.

Work must be completed within 12 months of Agency approval to qualify for the rebate. Only one rebate payment will be processed by the Agency per grant application. *An explanation of the terminology used within this document is found in Part III, Storefront Improvement Rebate Program Definitions.*

## II. PURPOSE

- To improve the exterior appearance of commercial buildings within the designated redevelopment project area.
- To serve as a financial catalyst for new business start-ups.

### Type of Improvements

- Construction-related renovations for new business start-ups.
- Removal of old signs, awnings and other exterior clutter.
- Exterior restuccoing and/or painting other than pure maintenance items.
- New signage, awnings and other exterior storefront improvements (e.g. window treatment).
- Remedy exterior code violations.
- Interior improvements that are clearly health and safety issues, or conversions that are necessary for accessibility requirements will also be considered.

### Program Objectives

- Promote architectural and aesthetic improvements.
- Facilitate pedestrian enhancements in the commercial corridor.
- Leverage private investment with public assistance.

### RDA Assistance Schedule for Renovation's

<u>ACTIVE BUSINESS</u>		<u>VACANT STRUCTURE</u>	
<u>Cost of Improvements</u>	<u>Amount of Rebate</u>	<u>Cost of Improvement.</u>	<u>Amount of Rebate</u>
\$ 1,000	\$ 500	\$ 1,000	\$ 250
2,000	1,000	2,000	500
3,000	1,500	3,000	750
4,000	2,000	4,000	1,000
5,000	2,500	5,000	1,250
6,000	3,000	6,000	1,500
7,000	3,500	7,000	1,750
8,000	4,000	8,000	2,000
9,000	4,500	9,000	2,250
10,000	5,000	10,000	2,500
11,000	5,500	11,000	2,750
12,000	6,000	12,000	3,000
13,000	6,500	13,000	3,250
14,000	7,000	14,000	3,500
15,000	7,500	15,000	3,750
16,000	8,000	16,000	4,000
17,000	8,500	17,000	4,250
18,000	9,000	18,000	4,500
19,000	9,500	19,000	4,750
20,000	10,000	20,000	5,000

Maximum Agency contribution for construction-related renovations for a **NEW BUSINESS START-UP** is \$20,000 or 50% of eligible cost, whichever is less. The maximum contribution for an **“ACTIVE BUSINESS”** will be \$20,000 or 50% of eligible improvement costs, whichever is less. The maximum Agency contributing for a **“VACANT STRUCTURE”** will be \$10,000 or 25% of eligible improvement costs, whichever is less. An active business relocating to a vacant building will be evaluated on a case by case basis.

#### **Program Emphasis**

- Exterior of buildings on blocks where substantial private and/or public improvements have been or soon will be made.
- Buildings affected by obsolete signs and deteriorated facades and/or exterior code violations.
- Major traffic thoroughfares with concentrated groupings of buildings with deteriorated or "cluttered" exterior appearances.

#### **Target Area: City/Agency Redevelopment Project Areas**

#### **Program Notes:**

A minimum of two (2) competitive bids must be requested from licensed contractors.

If the applicant can only secure one bid from a licensed contractor, the Agency may at its discretion award financial assistance if the applicant can clearly show an honest attempt was made to secure two bids. No application will be considered unless the bid estimate is signed and dated by the contractor, including his/her State license number.

An Agency check for the approved reimbursement will be paid directly to the applicant (or the contractor if appropriate) after all work is completed and inspected and all appropriate receipts have been submitted and approved by the City's Finance Department. Normal turnaround time for issuing the reimbursement check is 30 days. Any work accomplished before the application is approved by the Blythe Redevelopment Agency is not eligible for reimbursement.

The Redevelopment Agency may request a facade easement, from the building owner, to insure proper maintenance of the new facade improvements.

No application for grant assistance will be considered without an attached business plan, a sample outline of which is included in the application form.

**Exclusions:** Illegal uses in structures and non-conforming uses; structures with zoning code problems; buildings in an advanced state of deterioration; exclusive curb, gutter, sidewalk, parking lot resurfacing or landscaping not part of a larger improvement; professional fees.

### **III. STOREFRONT REBATE PROGRAM DEFINITIONS**

For purposes of this program, the following definitions will apply:

1. **Agency** - The Blythe Redevelopment Agency, also called the RDA.
2. **Awning/Canopy** - A temporary shelter, sometimes retractable, that is supported entirely from the exterior wall of a building.

3. **City** - The City of Blythe.
4. **Codes** - The Building Code and Zoning Code of the City of Blythe, latest editions.
5. **Design Guidelines** - Architectural design guidelines as set forth in the City of Blythe Downtown Design Guidelines, copies of which are available through the City's Planning Department.
6. **Exterior Lighting** - Lighting fixtures and the installation of same, attached or connected to building undergoing renovation. Exterior lighting does not include free standing lighting in the public right-of-way.
7. **Facade** - The entire exterior front surface of a building from grade to the roof line.
8. **Landscaping** - Landscaping items (e.g., trees, bushes, planter boxes) are eligible when considered integral to a larger renovation of the building. Eligibility is determined at the discretion of the Agency, but landscaping as a stand-alone improvement generally will not qualify for assistance.
9. **Final Design** - Detailed drawings showing the refined Preliminary Design and revised cost estimates.
10. **Passive Energy Conservation Equipment** - Equipment and/or materials which by their very nature and method of use and installation improve the energy efficiency of the building. Such equipment must be part of the building and may include canopies, awning, shutters, or other shading devices, and special glazing.
11. **Photographs** - Photos of two views of the existing storefront are to be provided with the application. Two photos of the completed project, same views, are to be provided with the final bill. All photos will become the property of the City of Blythe for use at their discretion.
12. **Program** - Storefront Rebate Improvement Program.
13. **Preliminary Design** - Initial conceptual sketches of improvements based on the objectives of the owner(s).
14. **Professional Fees** - Those expenses not spent on physical improvements, materials, equipment, or labor directly related to their installation. Example of these costs include, but are not limited to engineering fees, legal expenses and City permit fees, and they are not assistance eligible.
15. **Shutter** - Moveable cover or screen for a door or window to provide protection from the elements.
16. **Sign** - Any commercial sign attached to the building which is consistent with the City's Sign Ordinance and any applicable Specific Plan.
17. **Working Specifications** - The drawings which show detailed methods of installation and materials, and the specifications therefrom to be followed in constructing the improvements.

#### **IV. ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS/AREA**

##### **A. Applicants**

Business owners and tenants of commercial property within the City/Agency Redevelopment Project Areas are eligible to apply for assistance. Tenants are required to provide documentation of the property owner's consent of the improvements at the time of initial application. Written consent may either be in the form of a lease indicating the lessee's responsibility for property renovation and repair or documentation of the property owner's agreement to the proposed rehabilitation.

##### **B. Areas**

The program's emphasis is the major business corridors, although areas which are located within the designated City/Agency Redevelopment Project Areas are also eligible for assistance consideration.

#### **V. ELIGIBLE TYPES OF IMPROVEMENTS**

Eligible improvements may include, but are not necessarily limited to new construction; facade renovation; signs; doors; windows; awnings; graphics; exterior lighting improvements and restuccoing. Capital improvements such as surface parking lot installation, sidewalks, lighting, curbs and gutters in conjunction with facade work, and certain types of passive energy conservation improvements are also examples of eligible improvements. All improvements must conform with City Building Codes and be approved in advance by the City's Development Services Department. Participant's proposals may be subject to design review by the City of Blythe Project Review Committee.

#### **VI. ELIGIBLE REIMBURSABLE EXPENDITURES**

Approved applicants who make improvements to the storefront are eligible for a rebate according to a category assistance schedule based on project cost. The Agency's maximum rebate is up to \$20,000 per applicant for a new business start-up or an Active Business, and \$10,000 per applicant with a Vacant Structure.

Reimbursements will be made for improvements started and completed after the Agency's acceptance of the final plans and specifications and Redevelopment Agency Board of Director's approval. Any costs incurred before this approval will not be reimbursed. Receipt of the rebate is subject to an inspection by City staff and the submission of complete documentation of project costs, including:

- 1) the applicant's canceled checks and/or invoices;
- 2) copies of building permits;
- 3) all contractor's waivers of liens; and,
- 4) two photographs of the building before and after completion of the project.

Professional, legal and City permit fees are examples of non-eligible improvements cost.

#### **VII. APPEAL PROCESS**

The applicant has the right to appeal City/Agency staff recommendations to the RDA Board of Directors. Decisions by the RDA Board of Directors are final.

## **VIII. STOREFRONT REBATE PROGRAM PROCEDURES**

- Step 1:** The applicant will be required to submit a one page narrative explaining the proposed project. No application will be considered until this informal explanation of work has been received and reviewed by Redevelopment Agency staff. The one page must include the applicant's name and phone number. Typed information is preferred, but at a minimum the information can be printed (it must be legible) and in ink to be considered.
- Step 2:** Follow-up contact will be made between Redevelopment Agency staff and the applicant. This step will be initiated by the Agency staff. The follow-up discussion will more thoroughly determine whether the project is located within the Redevelopment Project Areas the Downtown Blythe Area, and if the proposed activities are within the program guidelines. A copy of the Storefront Improvement Rebate Program Guidelines will be provided to the applicant. Applicants will be instructed whether they also must comply with the Downtown Design Guidelines.
- Step 3:** Business owner, property owner or tenant fills out application form and sends a fully completed application to the Agency with two photographs of the storefront. If the individual applying is not the property owner, documentation showing that the individual has the authorization of the property owner to perform the building renovation work will be required. Incomplete applications will not be considered. No application will be considered without a satisfactory business plan.
- Step 4:** The application is reviewed by the Agency staff to determine whether the activities are within the program guidelines, and the Downtown Design Guidelines, if applicable.
- Step 5:** If approved by the Redevelopment Agency Board of Directors the work must be started within 3 months and be completed within 12 months after Agency approval. Projects not completed within the 12 months shall lose their funding eligibility, unless an extension request has been approved by the Redevelopment Agency Board of Directors.
- Step 6:** Upon completion of the renovation work, applicant shall submit a simple written request for reimbursement, and this request shall include copies of relevant invoices, canceled checks, etc. to verify applicant's financial contribution towards the project. Normal turnaround time for issuing the reimbursement check is 30 days.



**RDA  
STOREFRONT  
IMPROVEMENT  
REBATE  
PROGRAM  
APPLICATION**

1. Applicant Name: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Store Address: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Telephone Applicant can be reached at during the day: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Best time to contact Applicant: \_\_\_\_\_
6. Store Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Business Type: \_\_\_\_\_  
Owner Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
(If different from applicant)
8. Description of Proposed Improvements:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Preliminary drawings and/or other pertinent information (e.g. photographs of 2 views of the project) should be included with the application. No recommendation will be made to the Redevelopment Agency Board of Directors until there is a clear understanding of the improvements for which assistance is being requested. Incomplete applications will not be processed. All applications for RDA assistant must include a satisfactory business plan. Project in the downtown area must also comply with the City of Blythe Downtown Design Guidelines.



9. Estimated total cost of project: \$\_\_\_\_\_
- A minimum of two (2) competitive bids must be requested from licensed contractors and submitted with the application for financial assistance under the Storefront Improvement Rebate Program, although under certain circumstances the Agency may award assistance with only one bid from a licensed contractor. Applicants who qualify will be reimbursed by the Agency for a portion of the total costs according to the RDA Assistance Schedule, Part II on page 2 following completion of the work
10. Two different angle photographs of the existing building are required with the application.

### DECLARATION

As the applicant, I \_\_\_\_\_ have thoroughly read the guidelines for the  
(Print name)

Storefront Improvement Rebate Program and agree to carry out the work in accordance with these guidelines. Further I agree to comply with design guidelines and the specific design recommendations of the Project Review Committee/Agency staff. Any changes in the approved plans or specifications must be presented to the Agency for approval before the work is begun. Work must be completed within 12 months of the Agency approval to qualify for the rebate. Projects not completed within the 12 months shall lose their funding eligibility, unless an extension request in writing, is approved by the Redevelopment Agency Board of Directors.

In addition, I agree to provide two photographs of the existing building with my application, and two photographs after the work is completed.

I understand that the Storefront Improvement Rebate Program works on a reimbursement basis and that I must submit detailed cost documentation, including canceled checks, paid invoices, copies of Building Permits, all contractor's waivers of lien, and two photographs of the completed storefront.

I understand that I cannot begin work on the improvements until my application has been approved by the Redevelopment Agency Board of Directors and copies of all necessary permits (e.g., building, sign, awning, etc.) have been approved by the City of Blythe. I realize that the cost of work performed prior to Agency approval will not be reimbursed. Also, I understand my application will not be considered unless my contractor bids are signed and dated by the contractor, and include his/her State license number.

I understand that Storefront Rebate assistance will not be provided twice to the same site, business, location, etc. within a seven (7) year period.

I understand I may be required to demonstrate financial capability to complete the work in a timely manner (e.g. business or personal financial statements).

I understand the Redevelopment Agency Board of Directors is the final authority for all matters concerning the Storefront Improvement Rebate Program and their decision is final.

I understand my application for RDA assistance will not be considered without an attached satisfactory business plan.

Finally, I fully understand the information contained in my application is accurate and complete to the best of my ability under penalty of perjury.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

For additional information, or submittal of the completed application:

Blythe Redevelopment Agency  
235 N. Broadway  
Blythe, CA 92225  
Attn: RDA Executive Director  
(760) 922-6161

## **SAMPLE BUSINESS PLAN OUTLINE**

### **Elements of a Business Plan**

1. Cover sheet
2. Statement of purpose
3. Table of contents

#### **I. The Business**

- A. Description of business
- B. Marketing
- C. Competition
- D. Operation procedure
- E. Personnel
- F. Business insurance

#### **II. Financial Data**

- A. Start-up budget
- B. Operating budget
- C. Capital equipment and supply list
- D. Balance sheet/breakeven analysis
- E. Pro-forma income projections - One year detail
- F. Pro-forma cash flow

This model is only a guide for developing your business plan. Other models may be acceptable and additional information on business plans can found through the Small Business Agency (SBA) on the World Wide Web at <http://www.sba.gov>, or possibly through the Palo Verde College Small Business Economic Development Center at 145 North Spring Street in the City of Blythe.